

# NORTHERN UFO NEWS

185

Winter 2000



**Happy Christmas  
and a great space odyssey  
for 2001**

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## J R Comments:

British UFOlogy is a strange place. It is perhaps the most skeptical community in the world - but at the same time generates possibly two of the best selling proponents of the ETH (Tim Good and Nick Pope) as well as probably the most successful magazine (UFO magazine from Quest). This battleground is usually amicable, with investigators learning to respect the differing opinions of others, but at times the debate can spill over into internecine warfare.

This is especially evident on the internet - the electronic equivalent of a toilet wall at the best of times - and when a highly touted case gets aired it flares into life with a vengeance.

For instance, on 9 July 2000 one small piece of video was taken in Hartford, Cheshire, and announced by some UFOlogists in blaring headlines to be one of the most significant ever recorded. This excited PR inevitably attracted media attention - to the extent that within days the case was on TV, in the national press and there were intense debates on the net. These debates settled less on the merits of the case and more on the manner by which it was promoted -for as events demonstrated this case certainly did not deserve the kind of hype that it obtained.

What was visible on screen was a small ball moving against a cloud base at speeds that appeared consistent with a wind borne object such as a balloon. It may, or, may not, have truly been a balloon (although the film was taken on a summer weekend afternoon when places - such as fairs - from where balloons might float skywards were obviously abundant). It may even have been a 'real' UFO. But this was never the key problem here. Rather it was the way the case became used as a catapult to project the phenomenon back into the headlines from which it has largely been absent this year.

Battle lines were drawn over the rights and wrongs of such activity. To what extent should we use any means at our disposal to promote the subject? Especially when the field is flagging and attendance at UFO conference is down, publishers are cancelling UFO related book projects like they are seditious tomes by anarchists and there is no doubt that the public has become slowly disillusioned. Or do we have even more of a responsibility to tell it like it is in these hard times

Ought we not to be even more open and honest regarding what we say and refrain from making extreme claims without extreme evidence in support? That was not the case with the Hartford video. UFO or not, it had yet to be properly investigated. Touting it in public as of major importance brings short-term gain at the expense of long term pain. For it is the scientific credibility of the subject that suffers when expectation fails to match delivery.

UFOlogy is in many senses at a point now where crucial decisions must be taken with the longer term in mind. And I think we ought to be having a proper debate on what these are rather than using the net to squabble over scraps.

What is becoming evident is that the elusive proof of alien contact is like the ridge on top of the hill that you are climbing - always further away now matter how many steps towards it that you seem to take. After 53 years can we really anticipate some grand revelation to come tomorrow or will our children's children be still waiting for ET to show himself and prove the UFO buffs right? It is at least arguable that the ETH has failed in its burden of proof and ought to be discarded as a viable concept. Heretical and contentious opinion, I know, but still a question we should ask ourselves.

Especially because the new breed of objectivity (a better term than skepticism because this is practiced by working UFOlogists and not debunkers) is paving the way to stunning revelations soon to come. This started in the US, where once proud cases like Roswell and the Williamette Pass photo, crumbled when they were dug deep into by open minded researchers not wanting to vindicate them or to demolish them but merely to discern the truth.

It has gathered huge momentum via UFOIN, formed a year ago as a net based community of objective UK investigators (its team of 25 now has some of the best minds in the country - from a range of well known groups). Without ever intending to become a destroyer of cases, it has been beavering away on a number of well known incidents and learning disturbing things about them. The evidence will be published in full soon enough and I don't intend to discuss it in detail until it is. But for those within UFOIN seeing it all unfold this year it is rather like witnessing the fall of the Roman Empire as significant case after significant case seems to become less than spectacular the deeper that you probe. Indeed some UFOlogists are even asking - is there any real UFOlogy left?

Now, personally, I am not (yet) doing this. I feel that valid reasons exist to support the likelihood of some new phenomena behind a few cases. But it is undoubtedly a dwindling few and I do accept the sincerity of those who feel the odds are mounting against this concept.

UFOIN is doing an important job, but, of course, should not be seen in isolation. It is vital that others approach UFOlogy from a more positive direction as the two sides of this divide are an important balance to one another. In a sense debunking - 'it can't be, so it isn't' - style of research which has been UFOlogy's enemy in the past is now almost redundant - replaced by UFOlogists themselves either seeking proof of something strange or to uncover evidence that a case is less extraordinary than it first appears.

What must not happen is that this turns into a bitter feud as we are really all working in a common direction - to find answers - and merely interpreting facts and evidence in different ways. Once we appreciate this and understand that in most such situations throughout history the truth will ultimately appear to be somewhere between the two extremes, then we might start to move out of a long period of stagnation.

It will be easy for the neo-skeptics like many in UFOIN to feel the game is done, UFOlogists have just been gullible fools and all that is needed now is to convince the world that there never were any aliens after all. It will be just as easy for the pro ETH lobby to see such neo skepticism as deception, even government backed fraud, and to switch off altogether on the grounds that there is nothing worth listening to.

Blind faith in ones correctness is a danger both for 'believers' and for 'skeptics' and what is needed now is for all sides to think hard about the data being sincerely offered by their 'rivals' in order to determine how best to respond. This requires something that UFOlogists - in the past - have never had in abundance. A willingness to admit that we all could be wrong, even when sure we are right.

If we react wisely and pay heed to the new evidence being offered by this debate we can turn conflict into progress. Otherwise it may degenerate into more years of petty bickering.

*The usual apologies for a five month gap between issues. I managed 3 in 12 months. Hope to improve on that in 2001. But as always you pay for issues, however long they take to reach you.*

## NEWS NEWS NEWS

:: *REQUIEM* ... It has been a sad time for the UFO community with the recent loss of three well known figures.

In August Cynthia Hind, the African UFOlogist renowned the world over for her globetrotting, sparkling lectures and her fine investigations on this vast continent succumbed to cancer. I was lucky to know her and her presence amongst us will be irreplaceable.

Only a few weeks later, in September, north-west UFOlogy lost one of its favourite sons — Arthur Tomlinson. Arthur ran the group DIGAP for many years and was one of the first people who befriended me when I became active in 1975. I did my first ever media appearance with him on Piccadilly Radio that February and he was a decent chap. He gave many lectures - doing so right up until his death - and indeed but for the petrol crisis, would have lectured only days beforehand in Ellesmere Port. He touched many lives during his stay within this subject.

We also recently lost Ron West, who operated the Project FT (Flying Triangle) data collection in Essex. But the silver lining is that this important work is being continued by Victor Kean who will ensure that the legacy Ron left will live on and a useful data-base is retained for the UFO community in years to come.

:: *UFO LAND*... It had to happen one day. We have had 'UFO Zone' (a glorified ghost train at the Granada TV theme park in Manchester) (containing an authentic UFO display created by Peter Hough and myself). Ian Mrzyglod tells me that a scary 'MIB' ride has also opened at Universal studios in Florida (well selling scary books by Jenny Randles anyhow). Now Eric von Daniken is reported to have signed a deal to create a UFO and mysteries based theme park in his native Switzerland. The multi million pound centre will be built at Interlaken and will house state of the art virtual reality simulators that will allow visitors to recreate the great wonders of the world. They will, for example, get to view the Nazca lines from above and go for a ride in a UFO. Perhaps unruly guests will be 'abducted' by strange black garbed creatures from the planet security guard? And I hear that package tours are being planned through the channel tunnel by train - probably, given the dizzying rides, operated by the 'Disorient Express' (Sorry it is Christmas!) It is set to open in summer 2002.

:: *Book News...* My latest book 'Time Storms' (which has UFO relevance but is primarily about real life time warp cases and how and why they might be occurring) is published in January from Piatkus. Not much else is happening UFO book wise for 2001 as yet - although Nick Redfern is believed to have sold a new 'government cover up' format book. More on that when we have it. Otherwise the recession is biting firmly for the moment with little to report.

### **CIRCULAR LOGIC**

It has been a while since my last report on crop circle activity in the UK, but 2000 has proven to be an interesting summer with several new developments in a field that really ought to have fizzled out when the extent of crop circle hoaxing became apparent. I left behind any direct investigation about 8 years ago because I felt all research was being compromised by the truckload of twits setting out to fake ever more ludicrous formations and, in effect, play to the gallery. Whatever real atmospheric phenomenon may, or may not, have created a few circles in the first place is being swamped by all this vandalism. Research is therefore impossible.

As we saw last issue news emerged in June of a crop circle wave occurring in Russia. A farmer found circles and thought vandals had been at work - citing a big hole in the centre. But the security team called in to study the marks ruled that a spaceship must have landed. As evidence they cited the same large hole in the centre of the circle! In the UK hoaxing has become so commonplace that these things are now less easily tolerated. And that led to the charging of a UFOlogist who was caught faking a formation this summer. The resulting case (reported as the first prosecution of a circle hoaxer) led to his fine and much media attention. Although I would not justify vandalism of any sort a few people did seem to support the idea of an 'experiment' to test public reaction.

Then along came an old nemesis, Colin Andrews, with shock news. One of the names the public most associate with crop circles, his 1989 book with Pat Delgado (*Circular Evidence*) set the mystery on the road to global awareness with its speculations about unknown energy forces. Colin has been in the USA for some time and getting funding from the Rockefeller Foundation who oddly seem to think it was worth investing lots of dosh into chasing people who wreck farmer's fields. Perhaps they should rename this organization 'off his' Rockefeller Foundation.

Anyhow, after 11 years (quoth the Daily Mail - although I don't think Rockefeller have been

involved that long) - Colin Andrews announced his findings. Oddly they have more than some similarity with those of people he once derided as skeptics (like Paul Fuller) and that they proffered a decade ago - without getting funding from anywhere.

Still, it was interesting to see Colin quoted as saying that the complex formations are hoaxes and the more simple circles result from a natural phenomenon. Whilst Fuller was supporting a wind based atmospheric cause for them, Delgado speaks of the earth's magnetic field 'electrocuting' the crop and laying it down.

However, this is not going to be the end of the debate, of course. The croppies got unexpected support from the Daily Mail and once interesting mystery writer Colin Wilson who seems to have lost the plot a bit in recent years. He got a full page on 10 August to explain 'Why I still believe that aliens created crop circles'. The article was as unbelievable as this headline - which shames the not exactly shameless Mail, I am sad to say.

When even Colin Andrews is talking sense and the other Colin is backed by a national newspaper to spout twaddle then something really is amiss.

Wilson amazingly appears to see Delgado as a scientist out to short change society by explaining away mysteries when he is 'pretty certain' crop circles are exciting. He then rapidly displays his scant familiarity with circles by destroying any argument that they are a natural phenomenon in this way. Its because they have only appeared in the past 20 years and if they were natural phenomena then, of course, they would not have done.

Oh dear Colin, the problem is that they haven't, as any decent reading of the literature would have told him. He wants to know why no circles were chronicled centuries ago and says 'Because I am fairly certain they did not exist'. But they did occur and they were chronicled. He just hasn't done his homework looking for them.

Wilson claims the first circles were in Canada in 1974 and the first British ones in 1980. But again he's way off beam (even Doug and Dave based theirs on 1960s circles from Australia). He dismisses whirlwinds in a sentence by claiming Meaden should have looked at tornadoes instead (!) Three quarters into his 'proof of alien reality and all we have so far are worrying errors and baseless dismissals. Then we hear about strange 'clicks' picked up at circle sites (something resolved long ago). Next that circles are precisely geometric and so evidence of fantastic skill and knowledge (not the ones I have measured!) Then some hilarious stuff about circles representing musical ratios. So now these circles are singing to us in an alien tongue!

Accordingly, one of the most respected writers in the field of the paranormal now tells us that after 'less than six months study' he is 'in no doubt' of the truth. 'Something or someone is trying to communicate with us but with the exaggerated caution of beings trying to get us slowly and gradually accustomed to the idea.'

Slowly and gradually? Since the first reported circles were 400 years ago 'very' slowly seems a wee bit more appropriate. Unhappily, Colin Wilson seems to have fallen prey to the great problem we all face in this field - wishful thinking - and also to be doing so on the basis of inadequate research and evidence that is a decade behind the times. I like Wilson's books on the paranormal but if he is going to leap head first into crop circle land he has to be way more in tune with the facts than so far demonstrated.

### ***CAN RADAR WAVES DOWN AIRCRAFT?***

This odd question is posed by a rather unexpected source - an American history professor, Elaine Scarry, from Harvard. She clearly has no idea how relevant it might be to UFOlogy. But there is a reason why.

Scarry investigated what began as a strange coincidence between two baffling air crashes involving aircraft leaving JFK airport in New York. The first, - a TWA flight to Paris - was in July 1996. The second - a Swissair flight to Geneva - came just over two years later. The first exploded in a fireball near Long Island. The second fell into the sea a few hundred miles north off Nova Scotia. Yet both had left JFK on a Wednesday at the exact same time - 8.19 pm.

As she was conducting her research for a small magazine a third crash occurred. This one, on Halloween 1999, involved an Egypt Air flight to Cairo. This wasn't a Wednesday and the plane took off after midnight. But it left JFK again at 19 minutes past the hour (1.19 am).

There had been a number of theories as to the cause of these accidents (transatlantic flights had previously had a good record and so three crashes in three years effecting one airport was certainly worrying). The TWA flight was at one time speculated as a victim of a missile strike because a 'UFO' was seen on radar and there was talk of tapes showing a collision vanishing. But the popular view is that a wing tank with gas pockets trapped inside exploded.

The Swissair accident is more baffling; although it was known that the on board computers were behaving very oddly and giving false readings. And the most recent disaster was initially reported as a suicide by the pilot because the plane seemed to literally steer itself straight into the Atlantic. But black box recordings from the cockpit prove that the crew were fighting to the end to save the plane that for no apparent reason simply went into a shallow dive into the ocean from which it never recovered.

Scarry has found a disturbing connection between these incidents. They all crossed an area of military activity where ships and aircraft were engaged in exercises. These all involved the transmission of radar and other frequency radiation in beams that cut the path of the civil aircraft. This should have been harmless. But, Scarry wonders, if it was. After all airlines are very sensitive to use of equipment like mobile phones because of the risk that they could interfere with on board computers. Research has shown that this can happen.

Although this theory has not impressed aviation experts interesting clues turned up in Scarry's research. For example, all the flights suffered unexplained lengthy radio black outs in the period before the crash - at the time when they were crossing the area of military operation. The TWA flight allegedly has strange radar signals tied to it. The Swissair plane was suffering unexplained electronic glitches. And the computer controls on board the EgyptAir plane seem to have been 'taken over' by an outside force that flew it seaward. External interference seems at work in all three accidents.

But why is this connected to UFOlogy? Perhaps it isn't. But as those familiar with the Rendlesham Forest case will recall, the three things connected with these mysterious plane crashes also all come together here.

The area involved in the sightings was at the centre of military energy beam and advanced telecommunications research - at sites on Orford Ness and locations such as Bawdsey and Martlesham Heath - all in the immediate vicinity of the December 1980 encounters. There was even an off shore military exercise underway when the close encounters happened. Radar, per se, is clearly is no threat. But these energy fields could be. That these experiments could provoke problems with transport in the area was also acknowledged. In fact the MoD issued a warning notice to both shipping and air traffic advising of this energy research and the need for precautions when passing nearby.

Moreover, there was a long track record of odd things reported in the area around the forest that may well be connected with these experiments. From glows in the atmosphere, to rippling currents of energy charging through the forest, electrostatic fields, radio interference (as reported by the air men during the sighting) and various other equipment malfunctions. It all sounds rather similar to the things being tied to the air crashes by Scarry's research.

But there is an even more remarkable connection - as reported in 'UFO Crash Landing'. The RAF have also experienced two time coincident plane crashes into the sea just north of here. In fact they both happened on one day. So strange were these crashes that the MoD even mooted the idea of a 'Bermuda Triangle' EM effect. Just one crew member escaped the doomed jets and what he says puts an interesting spin on all this. Just like the EgyptAir flight he says the computer controlled RAF jet was 'taken over' by interference of some sort and steered itself on a smooth course into the North Sea!

#### MAJOR ARTICLES ELSEWHERE

*Fortean Times is still monthly at £2.70 and on sale in newsagents. Recent highlights illustrate its key problem - news is largely a*

*newspaper pastiche. The July issue features recent UK sightings without any appraisal of them - restricting the value you can place on FT coverage...August has the most impressive article - a masterful deconstruction of the Kenneth Arnold case by James Easton. But all UFOlogists are advised to read another useful piece in the December issue where NUN reader Gordon Rutter gives the low down on fairy lore regarding fairy rings (often misreported these days as UFO landing sites). FT has become oddly skeptical of late, matching the mood of the UK it seems.*

#### **BUFORA Bulletin**                      **With subs**

June: A much better (than FT) round up by Gloria Dixon of recent BUFORA cases. Aug: Brian Allen has an interesting piece on UFOs and ASC and Malcolm Robinson sets out why Roswell was a crash of something 'not of this world' despite the autopsy footage hoax.

#### **Awareness**                                      **(CONTACT UK)**

Summer: A long look at recent crop circles with lots of pretty diagrams (as drawn by humans).

#### **IUR**    **(CUFOS, USA).**

Summer: Impressive issue of what (IMO) is often the worlds best journal for case studies (much like FSR used to be) continues irregular analysis of Roswell with a review of the computer enhancing of the Ramey memo. New technology allows this document to be 'read'. A daylight disk sighting that cast a moving shadow. And a fine study of a March 2000 EM and partial 'car stop' - a rather old fashioned (non alien) CE 2 case. Long time, no see here. A well reported case file by Mark Rodeghier & Martin Jasek.

With IUR also often beats any UK journal for detailed case studies, so well worth £25 for 12 issues. Although lately its been too bogged down with MUFON bureaucracy - doubtless necessary after the retirement of long term servant Walt Andrus (new chairman is the redoubtable John Schuessler who will certainly maintain the level of respect and hard work that Walt brought to America's premier membership group). Jun: 1999 cases of Israeli air base sighting with video film taken...Also profile on one Jenny Randles (but ignore the photo - taken before I lost 36 lbs)

**MAGONIA 70 (Editor John Rimmer)**

71: A critical assessment of TV paranormal pundit Dr Chris French... 72: A major review of the strengths and weaknesses of the ETH v psychosocial theories.

**Strange Daze 19 (Editor Gloria Dixon)**

Best value UK magazine IMO. Always packed with lively articles by top writers and expertly edited by Gloria Dixon. Treat yourself. 20: (Space projects that never left the ground, phantom airship waves)...21 (In depth interview with Andy Roberts, electro powered aircraft flights, a 1963 Oman sighting by RAF pilot)

**Project Red Book (YUFOS)**

Terrific local group magazine. Another bargain to snap up. Aside from latest news and articles on Yorkshire UFOlogy issues feature fascinating interviews: July (Paul Fuller), Aug (Graham Birdsall), Sep (Omar Fowler)

**UFO Network UK (editor P Cliffe Snr)**

News and events from this West Yorks group.

**OVNI (PRA)**

East Midlands UFO investigations from PRA. Edited by long serving UFOlogist Omar Fowler.

**SUFOG**

Southampton group coverage and useful updates on media coverage of UFOs each issue.

**Faster Than Light (Editor Chris Evers)**

Colourful potpourri of stuff from the internet.

**The Haunted Realm**

More short items and net chat from Sheffield.

**IUFOPRA Newsletter**

**UFO Historical Review (USA)**

Barry Greenwood's analysis of old cases via document retrieval looks (Sep) at the Great Falls Montana movie film case.

**Dead of Night**

Always a treat - 92 pages of material reported FT style on a huge range of supernatural topics. Keep you reading all through post Christmas!

**The Skeptic**

Leading UK skeptic's journal with more doubting Thomas's than you can shake an implant at, but necessary reading and with articles from UFOlogists Hilary Evans and Bob Morrell this issue (13-2) another sign of the shifting boundaries of modern times.

**BOOKS OF THE MOMENT**

**Abductions and aliens** by Chris Rutkowski  
Fusion Press 2000 240pages unillustrated Softback £9.99

Chris is Canada's best known UFOlogist and it is a nice treat to see this book available in the UK from a wise new publisher that has taken a chance on it. The climate could not be worse to launch such a good book and its non glossy format won't let it reach the public. But so what - this is a book well worth your tenner any day.

It is a sort of personal odyssey through alien contact and abduction cases, describing in detail a number of first hand investigations and stopping off to address all sorts of possible interpretations of this phenomenon on route. It is intelligently written by a highly experienced UFOlogist and as such knocks the spots off countless much more widely promoted twaddle that fills the bookshops from people who don't have a tenth of Chris's grasp of the issues.

Moreover, as this is written from a Canadian perspective the chances are you won't know most of the cases that it covers - making it for the UFOlogist a breath of fresh air. A bit like discovering the subject anew rather than taking another look at already familiar evidence.

It can be idiosyncratic in ideas at times and the publishers have depressingly failed to provide an index (a serious mistake in a book of this sort that will sell - not to general readers -but researchers who will want to *use* it). This is a shame as such a good book deserved better from its original (Canadian) publisher.

*Randles Rating: Don't hesitate if you have any interest in CE 4 cases.*

***You Can't Tell The People* by Georgina Bntni  
Sidgwick & Jackson 2000  
450 pages illus & photos Hardback £17.99**

Long awaited, but mildly disappointing book on the Rendlesham Forest case by internet gossip columnist Georgina Bruni. The foreword is by Nick Pope and they share an agent (along with Tim Good) so you know right away the ideology from which this is coming. Although, to be fair, I think it's a little less overtly ETH than you might have expected - whilst that's still the angle you seem pushed towards for this highly contentious set of sightings back in 1980.

Given Pope's association the book is sure to be seen as what it calls itself - a definitive account of the case. But that's hype. In truth it's a personal commentary on a quest to track down witnesses via the net. To some extent the author has succeeded (finding a couple who have never spoken before). But her relatively short involvement with such a complex case, let alone tenancy in UFOlogy, is a drawback as it means nuances and implications that are cast for the entire UFO mythos tend to get overlooked. Rendlesham is not just any case. It is UFOlogy in microcosm and this book reflects that well by demonstrating the strengths and weaknesses of UFO investigation and UFO writing.

To be fair it does contribute new things to the debate (an interview with the missing airman 'Cabansag' and a photo of the landing site taken the day after - for example). But these are a bit

unexciting. Cabansag says little. The photo shows just some trees. So overall the best part about the book is that it offers an outsiders view on a case that to date has largely been written about by people who have literally grown up with it across 20 years - bringing familiarity.

What really disappoints me, though, is that on the net Ms Bruni has long said this book will blow the skeptics out of the water and destroy the misperception (lighthouse & rabbits) theory once and for all. But it fails to do so. It skims over these issues too lightly and does not even mention their main proponent, who has done devastating research that simply had to be assessed in any self-proclaimed definitive book. This man James Easton is amazingly snubbed entirely despite Georgina being well aware (via net debates with him) of his research.

The rather bizarre title comes from a brief chat the author had with Maggie Thatcher at a dinner party. But when you read what Maggie actually said about UFOs (very little) and the spin put on it - a rather subjective one - you start to wonder how much more of this book is one part fact, one part wishful thinking.

This is not a bad book. It is well written, packed with information, a good overview of the case and an undoubtedly fresh approach that you must read it if you are at all intrigued by this incident. But do not presume it is the last word or indeed the only word. It is neither.

Curiously the blurb sent out promoting it was thin on new facts about the book and yet packed with pages about Ms Bruni's amazing life story as a private detective! Her escapades and globetrotting actually sound like they would make a very entertaining book. That I found myself wanting to read this unwritten autobiography instead of this book is a pity.

*Randles Rating: A new & useful overview, but not the final word by a Rendlesham tree trunk.*

*Also out... Dr David Gotlib, a Canadian therapist, edited the world's best journal on abductions -featuring debates, commentary by researchers and science journal digests. BAE (Bulletin of Anomalous Experience) has not been published since 1994 but a CD Rom is on sale with all five years issues. It's superb value.*

## INVESTIGATION Latest UFO sightings



### ***Pennine sparklers***

***Case 9909 8 Sep 1999 Ashton-U-Lyne, Lanes***

Mrs P woke at 05.20 to discover that there were lots of sparkling lights in the pre dawn sky over the hills to the north and west. As she watched these they started to flash. Then they began to move. Two travelled away to the west and one moved directly upwards. Others drifted away across the Pennines eastwards. They were definitely moving apart in three different directions. All told they were in view a couple of minutes.

The witness was of an ETH mind set and spoke of her certainty that she had seen 'spacecraft'.

*Conclusion: If stationary these would surely be stellar objects as they looked just like stars, but the witness is adamant that they moved long distances. Most likely there was much air traffic in holding patterns that morning as planes into Manchester do line up here and change direction several times in this pattern. When lining up onto the runway they can seem to be stationary and then move away at accelerating speed.*

### ***MIB target skywatching UFologists***

***Case 9910 4 Oct 1999 Maryport, Cumbria  
Report by Kevin Owen***

Sharon Larkin is a well known Cumbrian UFOlogist who features often in her local media - with them publishing what they brand her 'S Files'. The paper has also published her stated ambition to become 'a top UFOlogist' and paranormal researcher. To this end she engages in a lot of skywatching on the coast looking for UFOs. Kevin has followed up for NUN her claims about the most remarkable incident during one such autumn skywatch in which she and several others had a close encounter and were allegedly harassed as a consequence.

They were on the road beside a supposedly disused Royal Naval arms depot at Broughton Moor east of Maryport. They had been there before and picked up literature and blueprints found inside abandoned buildings. But by October 1999 an MOD sign had gone up advising

Undeterred Sharon and several other UFOlogists did park there and at about 7.45

observed a low level hovering dark triangle over the fence with a bright white searchlight within the centre. They watched it for about 5 minutes, then the light went out and it vanished.

About 20 minutes later (or an hour) (not clear from the reports as both cited) the object reappeared, now seemingly ahead over the road to the north. This time it hovered for about an hour and they managed to take lots of still photos and one of the other watchers took video footage. Through binoculars small lights were seen emerging from and entering the big triangle. There was no sound other than barking dogs, owls and geese honking.

They were thrilled by this encounter. And they also attempted to 'communicate' with the UFO by flashing the car headlights. The object seemed to come slightly closer in response.

But then problems started. A white jeep was seen behind the fence of the supposedly closed based and before they knew where they were several such jeeps were on top of them and men in white coveralls were approaching with torches. At this the intrepid team drove away at speed - leading to a frantic chase through the dark lanes with the jeeps 'tailgating' them. This went on as far as Camerton village where the pursuit was broken off. Upon arrival home at about 23.00 Sharon says there was a phone call. On the other end was a man who refused to say who he was but claimed to have seen the black triangle too and to know that they had filmed it. He told her that on no account should they go to the press with this story - a request that was ignored as it featured prominently in a double page spread in the local media regarding Sharon two weeks later.

Sharon's photographs failed to come out - that is all they showed was blackness. Sharon seems unsurprised because the triangles have a haze underneath them that 'interferes with cameras'. Yet, allegedly, it did not interfere with the other skywatcher's camcorder. Sharon 'understood' that this did record images of the hovering triangle, but as of the completion of Kevin's report some weeks later she had not seen this film and had been unable to contact the man who had taken it.

Kevin was clearly impressed and speculates that unless the youth who had captured this footage comes forward we will not have 'proof but does wonder if he might have been 'silenced'. 'Was the flying triangle some new

*Conclusions: I have to say that, whilst respect Kevin's opinions and am sure Sharon did see something, I am less persuaded that we need to seek extraordinary answers here. If these people were visiting a base that was not quite as disused (even just a token presence) as the 'MoD wanted to let on, then they would inevitably have been observed by security. If rather than explain what they were up to when approached they drove off at speed, a chase might not be that surprising. If the MoD guards got their car reg. number then phoning Sharon at home (after checking with the police computer) would be easy. As for the MIB style phone call. This is odd, but maybe someone just thought it was a good joke or an effective scare tactics to keep UFO buffs off MoD property. As for the triangle... What has struck me with many of these cases is that they are stationary but with a big white star like light in the centre. As these days UFOs are almost expected to be triangular, it would be interesting to see some experimental data on how easy it is for the human senses to be fooled by - say - a bright star or ground floodlight. Then via optical illusion to 'fill in' a triangular shape around it in the darkness. I cannot argue that is specifically so here (it wouldn't be fair at a distance) but often in such cases I am fairly certain the light in the middle is the only thing 'really' there - not a triangle on which that light is fitted. But I don't expect many of you to agree with me on that one!*

### **Chopper Squad**

#### **Case 2000/5 20 July 2000 Glossop, Derbyshire**

Mr R reported this sighting to the High Peak free sheet newspaper and I called him to follow up his family's sighting. Here is what was discovered.

On this night, at 00.20, Mr R, a mechanical engineer, was closing the curtains in the guest bedroom. This affords a fine view north and east over the Peak District Pennines between Manchester and Sheffield. Above Tintwistle Moor he spotted something that he realised was not a ground light but actually in the sky. Being near mid summer this was still faintly lit.

In truth only a light was visible, red on top and blue underneath. It was stationary and this is what intrigued him. He called his son into the room and both watched it - through binoculars - for 15 minutes until it vanished. He told the press it shot off Mike lightning' but it just 'went out'

Puzzled R and son went back to bed, but were woken 40 minutes later by the sound of a low flying helicopter. Going out to watch this they saw that it was a twin rotor and it headed across the moors towards the spot where the UFO had been.

Once there it hovered and projected a searchlight toward the ground, moving this around 'as if searching for something'. The copter remained in view for 30 minutes before at 01.45 returning over Glossop in the same direction that it had arrived.

Mrs R stopped him and his son from driving up to Tintwistle Moor despite the hour to see if they could spot anything. Instead he called the paper next day to see if they could find other witnesses. Nobody else did come forward - although from local experience helicopters at night are not that uncommon (mountain rescue is the usual source) and most people at 1 am would just ignore the sound.

*Conclusion: We can say some things for certain. This was not a police helicopter (none were airborne). Nor do Mountain Rescue use twin rotors and Mr R recognised this one as a military Chinook. The MoD would not confirm or deny any exercises but merely said it would be 'unusual' to fly a helicopter in the dark. That said, I was able to establish that in July they did run 'Eagle Strike' - a troop landing exercise that used Chinooks to practice deployment at night. The only operational details on offer were that these flights occurred 'throughout the UK'. Checks revealed that there was a bright star in the sky at that time over Tintwistle Moor. It scintillated quite a lot. Through binoculars a red/blue colour separation is common. I think it is likely that this case boils down to two unrelated events - the star and a military exercise - that merely chanced to be in the same general area later that same night.*

### **Macclesfield Mystery**

#### **Case 2000/6 29 July 2000**

#### **Macclesfield, Cheshire**

Mrs P reported to NARO seeing an 'unusual star' at 22.15 in the northern sky. It was moving slowly east. She thought it was a plane but it was in an area of sky where planes never flew (Macclesfield sees a lot of Manchester bound traffic). Then a second appeared - but this object was moving even more slowly and for a brief period had two very bright searchlights coming out of the front. Mrs P called Jodrell Bank next day who asked NARO to investigate.

*Conclusions: For once a case was rapidly and conclusively solved. These objects were aircraft to and from Manchester. For a period of two hours the ATC re-routed traffic onto a normally unused path owing to a major summer millennium fireworks display in Tatton Park. From the south aircraft would look very odd indeed turning (and so briefly showing landing lights) and moving very slowly in line of sight.*

### **Hat Trick**

**Case 2000/3 2 July 2000  
Wythenshawe, Manchester**

This is certainly an odd case received by from Jodrell Bank within hours of its occurrence.

As first reported the witness - L - advised the following. He had been watching a football match and went out into the garden for some air as it was hot. Time about 22.45. Suddenly a small ball of red light appeared in the sky, rushed across the air and before he knew where he was struck L on the side of the head. There was no pain but his hat was set on fire. He went back indoors, put this small fire out and surveyed the damage, but left it at that. Next morning he went to look at the scene and found an unusual rock - an inch or so in diameter - that was very heavy, silver-yellow in colour and 'sulphurous'. He immediately concluded that this was the object that struck him and so - secured it and called Jodrell hoping the scientists there could help him to explain exactly what had happened.

On hearing this story my immediate suspicion was that L might have been hit by a small meteorite. He had never mentioned this possibility, but I wondered why Jodrell had assumed it to be a UFO and just passed it to me. L was happy to make the rock and his hat available for study so I told him to sit tight and I would sort out some analysis as swiftly as possible.

I was wary of L sensing he had a big story to sell and taking it to the media, but I struggled to get Jodrell interested. Astronomer Alistair Gunn did then agree to discuss the case with me (it had never even reached a scientist when L first called them - being routed via the switchboard direct to me). Dr Gunn said that it could be a meteorite - a chondrite he suggested. It took a while to get over the initial groan when the word 'UFO' was mentioned but he thanked me for treating this as a scientific mystery and not rushing to the media. I stressed that I felt we should act quickly before L called the tabloids. He agreed this made sense.

As such Dr Gunn wanted to detour to Wythenshawe on his way home that evening and I called L to set this up. But L was out and did not return my messages left for him all day.

Meantime, Dr Gunn had quickly grown cold on the case. I discovered that he had talked with a meteor expert who had said it was virtually certain this was not a meteorite. There was a trade off between momentum and heat when meteorites struck the ground and it was very improbable that a meteor would have sufficient kinetic energy to cause a fire in this hat. I pointed out the recent Colombian case where a meteorite strike is believed to have set fire to a wooden house killing some unfortunate children inside, but Dr Gunn said the man he spoke to was adamant a meteorite wasn't possible - especially given the small reported size. But, he added, if we checked the rock out and it turned out that it *was* a meteorite then they would like to take a look! I thanked him for his 'help'.

Meantime Professor Ray Leonard at the UMIST Total Technology Unit had agreed to help NARO on this case and set up lab facilities to identify the rock. Yet still L was not returning my messages to put this into operation.

Then I discovered that L appeared on BBC GMR radio the next morning (after we had the lab set up waiting for him) - a brief human interest item set up via the fact that he once worked for the BBC in Manchester. He had never mentioned this the day before and by now we were all getting rather fed up of this run around. GMR had also apparently promised to arrange a lab test on his rock but when I finally got through to L again he told me that GMRs contact had not come through and he would rather work with Jodrell anyway.

Peter Hough went to get the rock from L (who had something else to do so did not stay for the testing). Earth Sciences expert Dr Whitby (from Manchester University) and Professor Leonard at UMIST quickly identified the rock. It was not a meteorite, but Lead Sulphide. This was not native to Manchester but could be found relatively locally (e.g. in the Peak District about 30 miles away). However, there were traces of gum residue on the back and this looked like a small sample as might have been stuck to a children's magazine cover as a free rock sample or, indeed, as part of a museum display!

When told this news L accepted it without question, saying it must be the wrong rock and he'd look for what 'really' hit him. As the rock was found near a tree at the edge of the garden it could easily have just been tossed over his fence.

The hat - a baseball cap in fact - had a hole burned right through. L said the webbing was singed only at first but it had crumbled away in the 48 hours since the incident. The hole - the scientists said - could just as easily have been created using a poker. There was no way to say.

A few days later L advised us that he was now digging up his garden in a massive hunt for the real rock. So far no sign of it has appeared.

*Conclusion: Opinion in NARO is split over this case. Some of L's actions support the possibility of a hoax - although, if so, he never developed the most 'commercial' aspect of his story - that he had been struck by a meteorite. This tale would likely have brought national media attention. The 'evidence' certainly could have been faked, but there is no real support for this idea beyond the circumstantial and my view from my contact with L is that he was sincere. One possibility worth considering is ball lightning. In previous cases this has been known to emit heat and yet also not to hurt people that it strikes (one case saw it melt a glove and another pass right through a woman's body). Again L never mentioned the idea in our discussions, but there are supporting factors. Weather records show a local thunderstorm 45 minutes before the sighting. L described the weather as still 'oppressive' with a 'heavy atmosphere'. His TV set stopped working and an engineer came out to fix it next day. He said that he had also been out to another local house struck by lightning at 22.00 that same night. It had wrecked the VCR.*

### **This Just In...**

**NUFON Files...** Unfortunately, the NUFON case files - based for several years at the Friends Meeting House in Manchester - were ejected by the Quakers and we had to remove them at very short notice. They are in a temporary (inaccessible) home but we would like them to be available to researchers once again. To this end we need a venue. Ideally this should be in a city/major town centre in the region (e.g. Liverpool, Preston, Manchester, Sheffield etc). Access by transport (i.e. not a suburban site) is vital. It also needs a space to take a large filing cabinet. It needs to be secured and looked after by a local UFOlogist/group who can supervise any visits pre-arranged with them by researchers who agree to abide by witness confidentiality clauses. If you know somewhere that might fit the bill - let us know ASAP.

**Cownap Solved?...** Thanks to Roy Sandbach for a fascinating clue that may resolve one of the most famous cases from the North West - from the banks

of the River Weaver at Frodsham in 1978. As illustrated on the cover of FSR four poachers alleged they saw aliens and a landed UFO place a frame like cage around a cow preparing to abduct it. They fled before they saw what happened next. Roy in south west Scotland chanced upon an old piece of equipment. Turns out that vets once used a portable cage with sliding bars to keep cows still when treating them. If they needed to do so at night they would use lamps attached to their heads (to free both hands). It is not beyond the realms of possibility to see this apparently baffling CE 3 as a couple of vets (not aliens) with flashlights beside a tent in which their equipment was stored and using one of these cage frames to work on cattle. Well, stranger things have solved UFO cases before!

### **Coming Attractions**

*Monday 8 January 2001 7.00pm*

*BUFORA London lecture (see details below)*

Albert Budden on 'The Poltergeist Machine' -how strange phenomena may result from natural energy effects.

*Monday 5 February 2001 7.00pm BUFORA  
London lecture (see details below)*

Tom Perrot on 'Haunting Memories' - some of the cases he has studied as Ghost Club chairman.

*(All BUFORA lectures are at the new venue of the Quaker International Centre, 1 Byng Place near the British Museum and Russell Square tube. Attendance £4.50 with £2 discount for members)*

### **Groups in Northern Britain**

SPI Scotland	Linlithgow
SEMR	Bridge of Allan
Haunted Scotland	Kilmarnock
SRUFO	East Calder
NUFORI	Newcastle
Connect	Ilkley
UFO Network	Leeds
YUFOS	Sheffield
NLUFOIG	Morecombe
LAPIS	Blackpool
MARA	Liverpool
NARO	Gatley
Dragon	Staffs Moor
PRA	Derby
SUFOG	Rugby
IUFOPRA	Dublin, Ireland